



**THE HUMANE SOCIETY  
OF THE UNITED STATES**

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[humanesociety.org](http://humanesociety.org)

January 20, 2020

RE: Support for SB 127

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

On behalf of The Humane Society of the United States and our supporters in Maryland, I write in strong support of SB 127: Vehicle Laws – Cats and Dogs Left Unattended – Authorized Removal. Every year, animals suffer and die when left alone in hot cars. SB 127 goes a long way to ensuring that Good Samaritans can intervene to save the life of an animal who is at serious risk of bodily injury or death.

Plenty of Marylanders have come across animals in need of rescue from parked cars on hot days. First responders on the scene to rescue animals left in hot cars around the country have given firsthand accounts of the suffering that a dog left in such conditions can endure. They have described the claw marks left on the door with nail particles still stuck in them made by trapped animals and the contorted body shapes of those desperately trying to get out. They have described the look of horror on a person's face when they find out that their dog has suffered or died. Sixteen states have enacted laws allowing Good Samaritans to responsibly intervene and several states are considering legislation this year.

SB 127 includes thoughtful provisions that a Good Samaritan must take when entering a vehicle with the intent to save an animal from extreme weather conditions including:

- Good Samaritan notifies law enforcement or calls 911 prior to entering the vehicle
- Good Samaritan has a good faith belief the entry into the vehicle is necessary because the animal's safety, health or well-being appears to be in immediate danger and the conditions could reasonably be expected to cause extreme suffering or death
- Good Samaritan remains with the animal in a safe place, in proximity to the vehicle until help arrives.

Michael Koval, Chief of Police in Madison, Wisconsin—a state with a Good Samaritan law—says this about the legislation—

“In a City committed to the welfare of everyone---which includes our precious animal companions--- it makes perfect sense that there be consideration for a “good Samaritan” provision for those who conscientiously act to save an imperiled animal under conditions likely to cause death. MPD typically can respond to calls of this nature in a timely fashion to assess and take appropriate action. But in those instances when time brooks no delay and officers are all out servicing other calls, there may be instances where an immediate intervention is necessary to save the life of a pet. While we do not have much data on this narrow type of call for service, we can borrow some measure of insight when vulnerable children are left in a hot car unattended; in those instances, our citizens have typically called police/fire first without resorting to self-help measures. Thus, I do not believe that the proposed legislation would create a watershed of vigilante protectionism”

We respectfully urge committee members to support SB 127 as an important step toward achieving a more humane Maryland, and a chance to avoid unnecessary animal suffering.

Sincerely,

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